

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



Remarks of Joseph P. Walsh
Director
Department of Employment Services

Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor

On

Fiscal Year 2010 Summer Youth Employment Program

A Public Oversight Roundtable Before the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Honorable Councilmember Michael Brown

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Fiscal Year 2010 Summer Youth Employment Program
Committee on Housing & Workforce Development

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Good afternoon Chairperson Brown and members of the Committee on Housing & Workforce Development. I am Joseph Walsh, Director the Department of Employment Services. I am pleased to be here to discuss the preparations for the Summer Youth Employment Program, which begins in just a few days on June 28, 2010.

SYEP is one of the largest and most important things we do as a government. I am proud to say that this program is one of the ways the Fenty Administration clearly demonstrates the importance of investing in youth employment and work readiness. SYEP – and all our work with DC’s youth – is an investment in the future of Washington, D.C.

We know we are in the middle of tough economic times. It is more important now than ever before that we offer our youth the opportunity to work and gain valuable job-readiness skills so that they can succeed in life.

And it’s an investment that we know pays off - it is a program that benefits the community and the individual young people who participate.

One of the most important indicators of being employed when you are an adult is having work experience as a youth. At a time when the national recession has hit everyone hard, no one has been harder hit than youth seeking work: youth unemployment nationally is at its highest level since World War II.

In a time of high unemployment, especially for teens, these kinds of opportunities even more important than usual. The economy of the District and that of the nation needs this

generation of workers to be engaged in work in order to be able to compete in the future.

That's why of all the difficult and important work that is still to come this summer, the most important part of SYEP may be what happened this week: 21,285 District youth received a summer job assignment, 68.5% of whom live in wards 5, 7 and 8 – parts of the city hit hardest by the national recession and where teen unemployment is highest.

We know from a survey we just conducted that last year 83% of these youth would not have employment at all were it not for SYEP. That's 17,500 youth who would be unemployed this summer without the Summer Youth Employment Program.

And this is not just an investment in the future – it also helps DC right now. We know from our own and national survey's that the modest investment we make of about \$ 1,100 per youth in wages goes directly into the DC economy. And it means summer youth workers can provide essential financial support for themselves and their families at a time when so many are struggling to make ends meet.

This program and our other workforce programs for youth and adults are important investments that provide financial support to individuals and families during this recession and develop a skilled workforce. They are essential to our economic recovery – and also for providing hope and opportunity to individuals and families in the District.

We all know this recession has been deeper than any other since the Depression. It has lasted longer, there was a sharper increase in unemployment, and because of that we anticipate that full job recovery will take longer than during any recession in our lifetime. That's why our mission is, and will continue to be, to provide the basic services people depend on to survive in the face of this recession, and to develop the long-term programs and strategies that will create pathways leading to work readiness, educational opportunities, and a new job. That's why we are making an unprecedented \$27 million investment in direct job training for adults this year. And it is why we work so

hard on our flagship youth program, the Summer Youth Employment Program. Of all the programs we do in workforce development, this one has among the most profound and long term effects.

Let me brief you on some details of this year's program.

We have developed a 2010 SYEP that builds on the success of last year's program – which as you know served nearly 21,000 youth and came in approximately \$8 million under budget.

We again used the online registration, verification and eligibility system we developed last year and are again working with ADP to provide our payroll services. Youth will be paid via VISA Debit Card provided by ADP on four pay days throughout the summer. Just as we did last year, each pay period will be two weeks, and it takes approximately a week to process the payroll for all 21,000 youth. The first pay day for youth this year will be July 21. This payroll process was put in place last year following the problems with the 2008 payroll processing, and it resulted in 96% of all payments being made on time. It also is a standard payroll calendar that is followed by DC Government and by most private sector employers. To provide some additional financial assistance to youth as they start the program, participants will be given a one time \$25 transportation stipend during their first week of work, up from the \$10 we provide last year.

In addition to the successful elements from last year's program, we've also added additional components as part of an ongoing effort to always try to make the program better from one year to the next. For example, we've added new training for all supervisor and we brought in nationally recognized youth employment experts from the US Department of Labor and from Brandeis University to help.

We are also partnering with the new "Bank On Washington" initiative to help those who are "unbanked" get access to a bank account and learn financial literacy skills. SYEP participants ages 18-21 will be given the opportunity to create a no-fee bank account

through the “Bank On” program and have an option to have their summer wages direct deposited into that new account, or into an existing account. SYEP youth will be given more information on this new option later this week.

And as for summer jobs themselves, this year we have 544 Employers at more than 1,300 worksites as part of SYEP.

DC Government:	3,941
DPR+DDOE+DCPS:	8,360
Charters:	641
CBO:	6,597
Private:	1,021
Federal:	689

Public Service / Public Sector employment is the largest share of jobs in any Summer Youth program – and though we have now created a strong private, federal and CBO partnership, DC no exception.

But as I mentioned we have once again created strong partnerships for new job opportunities. We have more jobs with community based organizations this year, more in the Private Sector, and once again the Obama Administration made a tremendous commitment to provide job opportunities for DC’s youth in the Federal government.

In addition to serving more youth this year, we are also focusing on youth outcomes and program quality. We have begun the work this summer to create evaluations of the program, implement a new youth work readiness assessment, and adopt nationally recognized program quality standards.

Of course, all this matters for one reason: the experience that our young people have when they take part in Summer Youth Employment program. And according to results of a survey we just conducted of last year’s participants, youth who participated in SYEP for 2009 gave the program overwhelmingly high marks. The survey showed:

- 91 percent of youth rated SYEP as a Good or Excellent opportunity for themselves and other youth;
- 83 percent of youth would not have had a job in 2009 if they had not participated in SYEP;
- 89 percent of youth believed their SYEP experience would benefit them in their future job search and work life; and
- 38 percent of youth indicated that the 2009 SYEP was their first job.

Behind these statistics of course are real stories of real people – both youth and their employers. I'd like to conclude with just two of the thousands of comments that our participants from 2009 shared with us.

One major employer that was proud of its participation in SYEP is Wachovia. According to Erik Kodjanian who is Wachovia's Greater Washington, DC Market President:

"Wachovia's experience with the Summer Youth Employment Program in 2009 brought us something incredibly valuable...two new full-time team members. After an intensive summer learning experience, two of our five interns applied for full time jobs at Wachovia--and we hired them both. This program doesn't just allow DC-area companies a great opportunity to invest in the community...it can also be a valuable tool for recruiting. Our experience proves that if you invest in your interns--with training, mentoring and real "on the job" experience, you can finish the summer with effective new team members. We are definitely coming back to the program in 2010."

Many of the youth also shared with us how important their SYEP experience was. One participant – Coretta Troxler – worked at the DC Department of Transportation and said this about being part of SYEP:

“Working with DDOT for the second year in a row, I must say my summers continue to get better and better. DDOT has given me a chance to gain knowledge in my field of studies. During my first year of college, I had only read about the things I want to do; now I have finally gotten as taste of what I have been longing to achieve. I am proud to say that this experience has not taken away from my summer time, instead it has contributed towards my ambition for success.”

It’s the experience of Coretta and thousands just like her that reminds us all why Mayor Fenty has put such a high priority on this program. It’s why we work each year to improve the program, develop the infrastructure and systems we need to operate a program like this effectively and create thousands of new job opportunities each year. And it is why we invest in our youth to provide them with every opportunity to succeed – not just this summer but for the rest of their lives.

I look forward to discussing SYEP 2010 with you and the committee.